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THE
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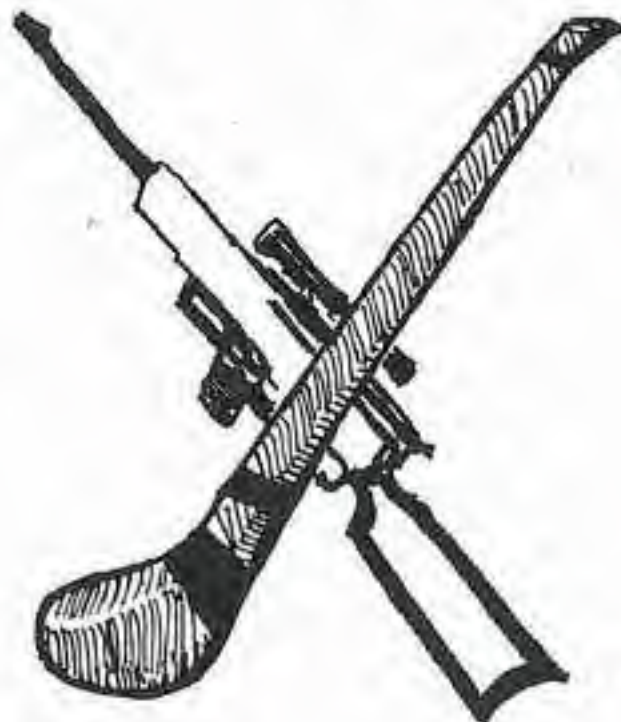
'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic ...' *James Connally*



Haughey's new departure



Sean South
commemoration



THE GAA AND H-BLOCK

THE G.A.A. AND H-BLOCK

The H-Block campaign was a model of everything that Irish politics needs to be rid of. Over the decades, nationalism has created a smog in people's minds. The smog is now lifting. There is still a good deal of it about, however, and right in the middle of the smog, the National H-Block/Armagh Committee is hard at work, though its task is now much harder, since the calling off of the hunger strike.

Selective humanitarianism, a confusion of mind which makes one unable to see consequences, a lack of moral courage which prevents one from heeding consequences even when one sees them, an irresponsible mentality of the herd, a militant Catholic devotionism that invades one's political outlook - these are traditional features of moderate nationalist opinion in Ireland. Of all those who foster these weaknesses and exploit them, none is more expert than the leading propagandist of the H-Block campaign, Tim Pat Coogan, editor of the *Irish Press* and author of *On The Blanket*.

Catholic Northern Ireland seems incapable as yet of resisting. North of the Border, the herd is on the rampage. Gerry Fitt has broken ranks and so, by and large, have the Republican Clubs. The ranks are, nevertheless, pretty numerous. Southern public opinion, however, resisted well, even before the collapse of the hunger strike.

A perfect example of the kind of support which Coogan and the National H-Block/Armagh Committee tried to mobilise is provided by the GAA. On December 4, the GAA called on the British Government "to take immediate steps to afford normal decent standards and humane treatment to the prisoners, to relieve further distress for their relatives and, in the interests of peace, bring the whole sad situation to an end". (*Irish Times*; 5 December 1980)

What are "normal decent standards?" The standards applying to ordinary prisoners are far more "decent" in Northern Ireland than in the Republic. They could, and should be im-

proved, of course, but we haven't heard any great outcry from the GAA over prison conditions down here, nor do we expect to.

The whole point of the hunger strike was precisely to reject "normal decent standards and humane treatment". Normal standards, no matter how good they might be, would never have been good enough for the H-Block protesters; they wanted recognition as abnormal prisoners, with abnormal standards to match.

There were two violations of "normal decent and humane treatment" in the H-Blocks. The prisoners were not clothed and they did not slop out. Both of these abnormal and indecent conditions were self-inflicted by prisoners who preferred them, in the circumstances, to normal decent conditions.

But during the hunger strike the GAA never said: "These men are soldiers of the IRA. We support the war which the IRA is waging for a united Ireland and we regret that the campaign has sunk to such a low level. This protest in H-Block, however, offered the opportunity of a strategic advance. The hunger strikers were trying to score a political victory for the IRA. We hope they can do it, and we'll do our bit to help". No, the GAA would never say that. And doubtless, some of them were confused poor creatures who didn't know what the clever organisers of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee (when did it stop calling itself the National **Smash** H-Block Committee?) know so well.

Since the GAA is so concerned about humane treatment for prisoners, how does it feel about hanging? Will it brave the wrath of the Gardai and come out in favour of the complete abolition of capital punishment in the Republic? Will it demand that the barbaric sentences recently passed by the Special Criminal Court not be carried out as they most certainly would if such sentences were passed by a Northern Irish court? Seeing is believing.

Advertisers' Message For Christmas

BY BRENDAN HAYES

Little kids skip through Disney dreams
Where the neon-lit shamrocks look real,
And American facades offer food, freedom
And hair-fixing for the privileged.

The smells are sweet with perfume and
Hydro-carbon and there's the peptic staleness
Floating outside the public-house doors, where
The shadows drink and dream of substance.

I recall that smell from a drunk,
Dragged drowned from the river on Christmas Eve
Musty, like an over-ripe grape — decaying
On a black evening I find it strong again.

Teenage girls in petal-pink jeans
Trip lightly on these silver streets at night,
But it is all so elusive for the poor,
And for the paranoid cowering in their collars.

I see Kevin again, peeping puppet-like
At a battery of colour T.V. sets
Through a booby-trapped window display —
A sad sentinel in the early winter chill.

And that poor woman with the dogs,
Giving her last crust to those wayward curs,
In the stark light of the yellow bulbs,
Will she lie once more on those slimy slabs?

Mixed-up media pander to the public
And flash the gospel of frozen food
(We call our streets after the famous,
While our city's unknown die in back lanes).

Down in an alley a clutch of snotty kids
Have taken their cue from the headache ads,
And find their brand X of relief in
The fantasy fumes from a paper bag.

Footpaths full of bargain-buyers; but I
Don't really give a damn, for all this
Techno-flash in plastic paradise,
Is more than I can bear at any time.

There goes the screaming ambulance to the river,
Another statistic sinks in the turgid tide —
As orange neons glisten on the water
"Get away from it all this week-end, fly ..."
... Oh to escape those messianic advertisers ...

SEAN SOUTH COMMEMORATION

PART ONE

Since the Sean South Commemoration first started in 1958 the numbers attending the annual event have gradually declined. This month only about 200 people attended, and this number included the members of a Co. Cork band and some children. Richard Behal of the Sinn Fein Ard Comhairle gave the oration and praised Sean South for his dedication and ideals. Prominent in this year's march were a few so-called socialists from the "Bottom Dog" group and the local branch of the People's Democracy. What were Sean South's ideals? The letter published below was written by South on January 3, 1949, and appeared in the "Limerick Leader" on the 10th of that month. The ideals expressed in the letter will help to explain the decline of the Sean South Commemoration and the absence of the local trade union and socialist movement from the yearly march.

CINEMA "STARS"

AND THEIR ATTITUDE TO COMMUNISM

A "RED" LIST

(To the Editor, "Limerick Leader")

A Dhuine Uasail — Allow me, through your columns, to enlighten some film fan(atic)s with regard to the true character of those individuals whom they have placed on pedestals of hero worship. I am sure that if they fully realised the dangers resulting from the stream of insidious propaganda which proceeds from Judaco-Masonic controlled sources, and which warps and corrupts the minds of our youth by implanting therein a false philosophy and concept of life, they would not hesitate to rise and strike.

WHAT AMERICAN CATHOLICS HAVE DONE

American Catholics have risen to the occasion by banding unitedly together in organisations whose policy it is to boycott both the films in which any of the undermentioned take part, and also the theatres which present them.

The recent successful campaigns against the showing in Ireland of "Duel in the Sun" and "Forever Amber" bear eloquent testimony that we have a public opinion capable of exerting itself when called upon. Yes, "when called", but what would happen should the call come too late?

Now is the time for action!

Useless and unavailing it will be for us to cry as we lie in chains!

Attack is the best means of defence.

On the other hand, however, maybe, we, descendants of those forefathers who fought and died so unselfishly, so heroically, so courageously, for **Faith and Fatherland**, are going to betray and forsake that gloriously noble heritage by succumbing, like slaves, to the modern attacks against God and country — attacks aided financially and morally by those whom our youth, through ignorance, strive to imitate.

In the issue at present at stake in the world to-day nobody can sit on the hedge — he that is not with Christ is against Christ.

A "RED" LIST

I sincerely hope that the publication of the list hereunder of Communist Film Stars, and those who, we say, euphemistically, have "Communist Tendencies", will have the desired effect:-

James Cagney, Joan Bennett, Betsy Blair, Humphrey Bogart, J. Edw. Bromberg, Eddie Cantor, Charlie Chaplain, John Cromwell, Edward Dmytryk, George Colouris, Phillip Dunne, Melvyn Douglas, Douglas Fairbanks Jnr.; Sylvia Fine, Henry Fonda, John Garfield, Betty Garrett, Paulette Goddard, Ira Gershwin, Ben Hecht, Paul Henreid, Katherine Hepburn, John Houseman, Marsha Hunt, Moss Hart, Walter Huston, William Holden, Olivia de Haviland, Rita Hayworth, Danny Kaye, Gene Kelly, Alexander Knox, Arthur Lubin, Fritz Lang, John H. Law, son, Burt Lancaster, Anatole Litvak, Myrna Loy, Peter Lorre, Frederick Marsh, Burgess Meredith, Groucho Marx, Harpo Marx, Larry Parks, Gregory Peck, Vincent Price, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Robeson, Adrian Scott, Joseph Siström, Robert Siodmack, Irwin Shaw, Frank Sinatra, Sylvia Sydney, Gail Wagner, Cornel Wilde, Orson Welles, Billy Wilder, Jane Wyatt.

(The above list, as is obvious, is composed of only the principal Red stars in the Hollywood firmament. Almost one-third of all the actors and actresses in Hollywood hold membership in the Communist Party).

SERIOUS THOUGHT

In view of the above and of the fact that some of the aforementioned people have publicly associated themselves with Communism by attending party public meetings, by nominating election candidates, by perversely lending their God-given talents to the Anti-God activities of the Communist Youth Organisations — in view of this it is incompatible that Irish Catholics can conscientiously choose for "amusement" pictures by their attendance at which they indirectly finance Communism and keep in their positions, to use their evil influence against God and man, those traitors who have sold themselves to the diabolical and inhuman task-master — Atheistic Communism.

I thank you, Mr. Editor, for the valuable space you have given me in your paper.

SEAN SABHAT

**32, Sraid Annrool, Luimneach
3rd January, 1949.**

Get the

Limerick Socialist

every month

DR. LONG WRITES HIS OWN HISTORY of the LIMERICK MEDICAL MISSION

THE DR. LONG STORY

PART EIGHTEEN

THE CAR-BOYCOTT

Dunore East is a pretty seaside village on the south coast of Ireland. It is a lovely spot for a quiet holiday in summer. Here, far from the mobs of Limerick, we spent our month with friends. I was greatly refreshed and looked forward to reopening the Mission Dispensary at the beginning of August. I was quite prepared for whatever new experiences we might be led through in the future. I earnestly hoped that all disturbances were now over, that I should not again be interfered with, and that all who wished to attend the Mission would be allowed to do so without annoyance. In this hope I was quickly disappointed, for on arriving at the Limerick Station the car drivers refused to drive any of my family home. This was inconvenient and annoying, especially when there were young children, tired after a long journey. On several other occasions Mrs. Long and the children were greatly inconvenienced by being refused a car. As for myself, since the commencement of the year the licensed jarveys had refused to drive me, and as Limerick cannot boast of any other public conveyance, at times I was greatly put about, and my practice injured, by not being able to secure a car in an emergency. I trusted that time and patience would bring about a better state of things; I pitied rather than blamed the jarveys, and took the boycott as pleasantly as possible.

Now, however, everything was quiet; we were able to get about in the streets without insult; nothing unpleasant remained but this stupid car-boycott. I formed the opinion from conversation with several of the jarveys who came as patients to the dispensary that it was not serious, that it was kept up by a few men by whom the rest were led, and that a little firmness would succeed in breaking it down. In this I was mistaken. I was annoyed that they should refuse to drive my family, and determined to make an attempt to put an end to it for the sake of all concerned. How far, if at all, I was personally to blame for the events I am now about to relate I must leave others to judge — I did what I believed to be right at the time.

The jarveys gave two reasons for refusing to drive — they feared being mobbed, and they feared that I would "proselytise" them if I sat on their car. Fear alone had robbed them of their manhood, so that they could not drive a lady and her children because they belonged to me. They had some reason in their first excuse, for several who subsequently attempted to drive me were beaten. But there was no reason for their being afraid of my hurting them in any way. I had been on very friendly terms with some of these men before the disturbances commenced, and on several occasions during a long drive they had entered freely into conversation even on religious subjects, and I must confess that they did their best to convert me to their way of thinking. Although they assured me that I was outside "the one true Church", and on the broad road to perdition, I did not take offence, and we always parted good friends.

Having now become such a notorious character and being branded as "a proselytiser", they feared to drive me, lest I should seize the opportunity, while sitting on their car, of forcing religious conversation upon them; and all assurances to the contrary were of no avail. I

made up my mind to test the strength of this boycott before it became permanent. Having made myself acquainted with their regulations and bye-laws, I determined to insist on being driven.

On Saturday, August 10th, about 12.30 p.m., having received a call to visit a patient at some distance, I got upon the first car I met on the stand at the corner of William Street, and asked the jarvey to drive me to the Military Road. When he recognised who he had for a fare he appeared frightened, and nervously said: "I'll not drive you". "Why not?" I asked. "I'd be afraid of my life", he replied. I tried to assure him he need not fear, that if he wished we would take a policeman on the car with us, but he would not move though a policeman came to encourage him.

"Well", I said, "drive me to the Town Hall; you cannot refuse to take me there to see the High Constable about this matter". "I'll drive you nowhere, and get down off my car", was his answer, at the same time endeavouring to push me off the seat. I called a policeman and asked him to protect me from his assault, and said: "I have engaged this public car, as I have every right to do, and since you refuse to drive me to see the High Constable, which according to your rules you are bound to do if any dispute should arise I will remain on this car until the High Constable comes to me". Having thus entirely committed myself, I sat quietly and waited for the High Constable. The jarvey was a bit puzzled, he got off the car, looked at me, and I smiled at him. A great crowd had now collected — it being market day the city was more thronged than usual — and were interested spectators of this dispute between the jarvey and his fare. Someone suggested to take the horse from under the car. This was quickly done, several men lending a hand. One could not help being amused as they laid the shafts on the ground. I was able to comfortably retain my seat, but when they proceeded to pull the cushions off the car and to hoist the shafts in the air, it was with difficulty I remained on the car by climbing into the driver's seat. This movement was greeted with a great deal of shouting, while I tried to take it all as pleasantly as possible.

At this moment, Mr. Forrest, the City High Constable, pushed his way through the crowd. He immediately commenced to abuse me for creating such a disturbance; he would not listen to me when I told him how I had asked this man to drive, and what he had done to me. Having secured the jarvey's name and number I got off the car, and under an escort of police and a send-off from the crowd, I proceeded to visit my patient.

I formally reported this jarvey for his refusal to drive, and related the incident to the Secretary of the Hackney Car Committee; at the same time I stated that I held him responsible for the conduct of these jarveys, and asked that immediate steps might be taken to secure to me the enjoyment of my right to hire a public car in Limerick.

On Wednesday, August 21st, my letter of complaint came before the Hackney Car Committee of the Corporation, the Mayor presiding.

The situation was discussed by the Committee. The Mayor said: "Under ordinary circumstances it would be a grievous offence for a jarvey to refuse to drive any person, but is this an ordinary circumstance? We know that the Judge and a Bench of Magistrates in their Courts, and

some people who would be best calculated to defend this gentleman's conduct, have refused to identify themselves with him. If these jarveys were to drive this proselytiser about the city, they would leave themselves open to certain pains and penalties in the locality in which they reside. I regret the incident that has occurred, but I don't think that this Committee would be bound to take any action in the matter. That is my own honest opinion".

The Mayor then read bye-law No. 8 which was as follows: "That no owner or driver refuse a call while on a stand, unless, on complaint being made, he can give satisfactory proof to the Inspector that he had good and valid excuse for so refusing". The Committee were of the opinion that the jarveys were justified in refusing to drive, one member saying he thought "a sore head to be a very substantial reason". Mr. Forrest's report was adopted, and he was instructed to consult with the law-adviser as to the advisability of prosecuting me for obstructing the thoroughfare. This he did, and on Thursday evening, August 29th, the law-adviser's report was

read at the meeting of the Corporation. In this report he expressed his opinion that the Medical Missionary could be prosecuted for obstruction. The question was then raised as to whether taking such a step would not be playing into my hands by giving me some excuse to act the part of a martyr, but the Councillors in the end unanimously adopted a resolution that I should be prosecuted. They said that while they were ready to respect clergymen of any denomination who came amongst them, Dr. Long, who had certainly interfered with the peace and prosperity of the city, was not wanted there.

The next day at the Petty Sessions Court, Mr. John Dundon, solicitor to the Corporation, applied to the presiding magistrates, Messrs. Hall, Guinane, and Roche, for a summons against me for alleged obstruction. He stated the grounds on which he made the application. Mr. Hall said: "I think Mr. Dundon is right, and as I am in the chair I will sign the summons, to be served in the usual way for the following Friday".

WHO'S A BRIT?

Gerry Fitt in a recent interview says that the SDLP now represents no-one in Belfast. Fitt has been condemning the 'green nationalism' of the SDLP since he resigned from the party, and had urged the British Government not to give in to the IRA hunger strikers.

If repeated opinion polls are to be believed, a large proportion of Northern Catholics are quite prepared to accept the Union with Britain and are not pining away for a united Ireland. If this is so, then it is certainly true that the greener than green SDLP (should it not simply be the 'P', since the "Social Democratic and Labour" facade has long vanished) does not represent this large section of Catholic opinion.

But almost all politically active Catholics in Ireland subscribe to the tenets of nationalism in one form or another, so why are these Catholic 'unionists' not represented politically? They merely passively watch the war between the IRA and the Unionists feeling that it's not very nice, but they **do** nothing. They **can** do nothing because they are unorganised, unmobilised, and only people who are organised effectively count in politics.

One cannot organise an effective movement against violence, because the logic of the nationalist positions demands

violence. The opposition of the unionist population means that the nationalist programme **can** only be implemented by violence. Anyone who takes nationalism seriously **and** is politically astute cannot but realise the necessity of some form of coercion. Even the "constitutional" SDLP know their bleatings about "removing the guarantee" only get a hearing because the IRA are blasting away in the background. As long as nationalism remains the conventional wisdom of political activism for Catholics, it will produce a regular crop of "men of violence" and real politik campfollowers.

But Fitt still says: "I am a nationalist because I am a socialist" (**In Dublin**, 22 Nov. 1980), and justifies his opposition to the IRA partly on the grounds that they are damaging the national cause.

Until a positive political campaign is organised against the fundamentals of nationalism there is no danger to the 'green nationalism' of the SDLP OR to the political justification for the IRA. Gerry Fitt may be added to the Provos' demonology, but he poses no ultimate threat to them. Who's a Brit? Certainly not Gerry Fitt.

SOUTHERN SENSE

Will 'socialists' in the Republic who are hung up on nationalism be the last to read the signs that the first national aim is fast fading as a cause to set hearts a-beating and feet a-marching (inevitably behind the likes of Sile de Valera, Neil Blaney, Kevin Boland etc) ? In despair for his cause, even Tim Pat Coogan of the 'Irish Press' whined about his "selfish Ireland" of the 70s where "more people marched to get the PAYE system changed in a few days than the North brought onto the streets in 10 years" ("Hibernia", Oct. 16)

Coogan enthuses about street politics for "the cause of Ireland" but lectures on the primacy of the Dail when the people march for a fairer tax system).

Fellow nationalist, journalist Vincent Browne, is no

happier about the disposition of the troops in the South: "there has arisen the spectre of a deep and hostile division between the nationalist community in the North and the vast majority of the people of Southern Ireland... The Catholic minority (in the North) must now bear whatever further tribulations arise (from the H-Block campaign) very much as an isolated case, ignored and reviled by the rest of Ireland" (Magill, Dec. 1980)

Black stuff indeed for the nationalists Coogan and Browne who must soon contemplate the spectre of their front line troops, the Northern minority, going soft (and sensible) about the "national cause" saying "to hell with your futile tribulations"!

THE CORPORATION

Part Six

by Michael Hogan

Religion and Politics

FROM SHAWN-A-SCOUR
NUMBER 111

Two rascal tribes contend for power;
They're called the Tories and the Whigs,
As stocked with conscience as wild pigs.
But there's some little difference still
Between their ways of doing ill;
The Tories to their instincts true,
Say nothing more than what they do:
Hang, damn or quarter, starve or feed,
They say it and they do the deed;
While the deceitful Whigs would swear
The sun and moon from Heaven's sphere,
To act with liberal healing hand
To our betrayed and trampled land.
But the forsworn treacherous clan
Would poison every Irishman,
And under friendship's holy hood
Suck the whole Irish people's blood,
Have they not starved them branch and root,
And in their place supplied the brute:
Drove into exile or the grave
Our honest peasants pure and brave,
And those glossed murderers and stabbers,
Perjured hypocrites—swindling jobbers—
Of devilry and fraud the flower,
'Tis those the Priests would keep in power.
"Oh, Lord have mercy on us, Shawn!
My blood runs cold, my breath is gone!
Why, troth, I'd rather be a pig
Then one of those curst rogues—a whig."
"Silence madam, hear me through,
These lessons to your mind are new;
But you'll be wiser by and by,
When things grow familiar to your eye.
Now listen quietly if you please,—
Those Whiggish rogues and rapparees
Have clenched each trick and godless scheme
In Religion's prostituted name.
When the political seas run high,
Religion is their rallying cry;
They find it handy to delude
Into their snares the hoodwinked crowd.
When knaves aspire to represent
Moryah our cause in Parliament;
(The Devil can do his business best

When in a saintly livery dressed;)
They soap the millions soft and sweet,
Shake hands with every one they meet:
That's every one who has a vote,
There's no one else of any note
They vow and promise and protest
For land and creed to do their best;
Their blessed friends come boldly out,
"The Church's in danger," is the shout;
And a new pillar must be sent
To prop it up in Parliament:
Pulpit, balcony and platform
Ring with the fierce election storm;
And the blind passions of the mob
Are roused to sledge and clench the job;
Drugged whiskey flies in cans about,
And hell's whole army seems let out;
Houses are smashed to tattered shreds,
And neighbours break each other's heads;
Drunken viragos roar and swear,
And demon yellings fill the air;
The Ten Commandments for the time
Seem cancelled to make room for crime;
The devil reels laughing at the fun,
To see his work so neatly done;
But when the Election's storm is past,
All the poor fools aside are cast;
And the devoted candidate
Goes to the House his trust to cheat:
The Treasury is in his eye
To all things else he bids good bye;
Except he may obtain a post
For some one's friends who helped him most.
But the poor silly trusting crowd,
Whose cause to aid he swore and vowed,
May go with hungry maws to bed,
And bite the air for lack of bread.
He's gained his point, and devil may care
How the deluded fools may fare,
For well he knows he can resort
Again to clerical support.

The Battle of William Street

That great Election battle-day I sing,
In William-street, where warriors had their fling;
When Garibaldi Gamble, glibly bold,
Rebelled against the champions of the Fold:
And in swift vengeance on his head drew down
The wrath of half the vagabonds of the town;
The ragged seraphs spiritualised with malt,
Threw up the barricades, and commenced the assault.
Then fearless Larry foremost in the fray
Had swept the votes of half the town away,
And into Parliament in spite of fate
Russell and Puff, returned Sir Peter Tait;
But the Church-warriors to the rescue ran
Then, nor till then, the holy war began.
Fierce marched the troops, the devil paved the road,
Then flew the orders and the whiskey flowed;
Agents with bags of cash flew here and there
Enlisting rowdy myrimidons for war;
Even golden saints their battle standards raised,
Joined in the *melee* and like power blazed;
Here roared a band of drunken stripling lads,
Some armed with pavers, some with leaden gads;
There reeled she-devils all unwashed, unshod
Cheering for religion, swearing Christ and God,
Some in the poor-house were unknown to fame,
Whiskey and cursing till the election came;
Then *influence* called those devil's angels out,
To swell the tumult and augment the rout.

The Fenians

Beyond the several sections of mankind,
The Irish race to their own good are blind;
Poor, trusting birds by prowling rogues beset,
By scoundrels fleeced and caught by every net:
Politically bedevilled and befooled,
Duped by the Church and by the State misruled;
For when the two sublime machines agree
To manufacture slaves, the land must be

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Miraculously happy through and through,
With evils many and with blissings few.
But what about the Fenians? poor brave fools,
Still chained at barbarous tasks in penal schools;
Wouldn't Ireland's Cardinal Viceroy interfere
To free the sufferers from their doom severe?
But he would sooner seven years' famine see
Eating the country than the Fenians free.
England and God by turns he nicely serves,
And England loves him as his worth deserves,
Her holy pet she gratefully regales
Even at one levee with the Prince of Wales.
While Ireland, like poor Lazarus desolate,
Starving and begging stands outside the gate.
Then if her outraged children dare rebel,
Damn them to Pentonville that rivals hell;
And while they suffer in that den of shame,
Belie their acts and murder their good name.
This theology's built on bellyology,
For which the devil himself has no apology.
'Twas very lately whispered here in heaven
That the poor Fenians would not be forgiven,
Until some canonized tinker shall invent
A new devise eternity to augment;
By sawdering to its skirts some pliable stuff,
Until Moriarty says 'tis long enough.

Haughey's New Departure

For the second time Charles Haughey has held a highly publicised meeting with Mrs. Thatcher, and for the second time he appears to have given everything and got nothing. We haven't a clue what he thinks he's playing at, but it is remarkable that so many nationalists are able to take comfort of a sort from his inexplicable activities.

For a second time, the editor of the *Irish Press* can be seen swallowing his very grave doubts in the middle of his editorial and proclaiming that a good day's work was done. (But he has to, hasn't he?)

Ruairi O'Bradaigh, president of Provisional Sinn Fein, couldn't see it that way. "In a statement, he said that ... the much vaunted joint studies led nowhere but back into entanglement with the UK". (*Irish Times* 10 December 1980)

O'Bradaigh has a point. The official communique says that relations between the United Kingdom and the Republic have been strained by civil unrest in Northern Ireland. To bring peace to Northern Ireland and improve relations between the Republic and the United Kingdom would be a good thing. The best way to do this would be to ... improve relations between the UK and the Republic! "Accordingly" (the communique says) Haughey and Thatcher have commissioned joint studies, on "possible new industrial structures, citizenship rights", etc.

Possible new institutional structures uniting the Republic with the United Kingdom? Certainly, that IS the way to unite Ireland if it can't bear to be divided. But even Haughey might have difficulty selling such a strategy as modern republicanism - if he takes it much further, which we doubt.

H-BLOCK AND HUMANITARIANISM

What were the hunger strikers in H-Block and Armagh trying to achieve? They not simply aiming for improved prison conditions. **Special** prison conditions, **better conditions than other prisoners have**, was what they demanded. Also, they made no secret of their wish to influence conditions **outside** the prisons. They were motivated more by the desire to score a political victory for the IRA over the British Government than by their personal interests as prisoners.

One must give the prisoners credit for their idealism and spirit of self-sacrifice. Their sacrifices were worthy of a better cause. At the same time one must say that the appeal made by the National H-Block/Armagh Committee to humanitarian instincts was a dishonest appeal. H-Block/Armagh is not a humanitarian issue. It is a political issue.

These hunger strikes were bound up with the conduct of war in Northern Ireland. With the slaughters of Oxford Street, Bessbrook, Le Mon and so forth behind us, is it humanitarian to want more of the same? There is not the slightest doubt that the political effect of a victory for the hunger strikers would have been a massive escalation of sectarian tension. The Provos, for their part, would have encouraged to prolong their futile and reactionary war.

Appeals were made both to the British Government and to the prisoners themselves to bring the hunger-strike to an end. But there is another body which had that power: the Army Council of the Provisional IRA.

This fact has been overlooked by the press commentators, who have fallen into a snare set by Provisional Sinn Fein - some

of them with their eyes open and others with their eyes shut.

Some months ago, the press began to report on the prospect of hunger strikes. It was explained that Provisional Sinn Fein was opposed to this course being taken. In fact, Provisional Sinn Fein had consistently argued against it, but they had less and less power to dissuade the prisoners from taking the extreme step: H-Block was generating its own momentum. Whether or not the Provisional IRA agreed with Provisional Sinn Fein was not made clear; but we were given no indication on that the two were at logger-heads.

All this is so much nonsense. The Protesting prisoners cannot, and do not, have it both ways. If they consider themselves members of an army, then they consider themselves by military discipline to obey their command staff. If their Army Council had ordered them to abandon their hunger-strike, they would have done so.

This was well understood by their ex-comrades in Sinn Fein the Workers' Party "Don't let these men die" is the H-Block slogan. Correct. Then let their mentors O Bradaigh, O'Conail, Adams and their clerical advisers instruct them to end their hunger strike. They have the power and they know it". (Editorial; **Workers' Life**; December '80).

And so said all of us. But the Provo leaders did not make such a call. It was only when the hunger strikers realised that their case was hopeless, that the British Government was not going to give way and that they were going to have to die for their IRA beliefs, that they threw in the towel and called off the protest.

SOCIALISM OR NATIONALISM?

THE working class in Ireland has been divided by nationalism for many years. Nationalism is a form of upper-class ideology. It portrays all classes, capitalists and workers alike, as one big happy Irish family whose only problems were caused by foreign interference - an interference now happily ended, except in the lost Six Counties, whose recovery we must all make our first priority. **If workers act under the influence of nationalism, they act under the influence of upper-class ideology.**

As workers, we see the predominance of nationalism in Irish political life as the greatest force hindering the development of working class politics in this country. The Irish labour movement, since its foundation in Belfast in the 1890s, has been bedevilled by the national question. The continued national conflict has effectively neutralised working class political power and prevented its emergence as a significant force in both communities on this island. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that Dublin and Belfast, unique among the industrialized areas of Europe, are without a mass political movement expressing the interests of workers.

It cannot be said that Irish workers are more docile than their English or European counterparts. The history of Irish trade unionism shows them to be as militant as their fellows elsewhere when pressing their economic demands. Their failure to advance the struggle to a political level as was the case in the most industrialized countries, can only be attributed to the saturation of Irish politics with nationalism and its devious influence on workers of both communities.

In the South, workers' attention has been directed to the so-called "unnatural" division of the nation, with a resultant distraction from the real social grievances in their own society. In the North, the Protestant com-

munity has clung together defensively across class barriers in response to threats from the South.

For over ten years now, the militant wing of Irish nationalism has waged a sustained military campaign in an effort to coerce the Protestant community (the majority of whom are industrial workers) into a united Ireland. In spite of the fact that this campaign has done more to divide the workers on this island, many people who call themselves socialists give it support.

The majority of the people of Northern Ireland has stated again and again that they do not want to become part of a united Irish state, and eleven years of murder, maimings and destruction of employment has failed to break their will.

We in Socialists Against Nationalism believe that nationalism has latched onto the working class, North and South for long enough. It's time that real social problems like unemployment, bad housing, etc. were solved. But it is not enough to concentrate on social issues and just ignore the national question, as some socialists have tried to do. Socialists must pursue a democratic policy of recognising the right of the people of Northern Ireland to live in the state of their choice. They must oppose the philosophy of anti-partitionism, whether it is promoted by the Southern ruling class or by their "socialist" hangers on. These people merely serve to attract socialist-minded workers to the banner of the Southern political establishment, and waste their energies in a futile struggle against their northern fellow workers.

Workers have everything to gain by making a declaration of independence from the ideology of the Southern ruling class.